

Progressivism and US Foreign Policy Between the World Wars

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In *Progressivism and US Foreign Policy Between the World Wars*, Molly Cochran and Cornelia Navari present a valuable collection of essays that address the lasting impact of the Progressive Movement upon the foreign relations of the United States during the inter-war period and beyond. Although several essays draw upon the narrative and events of the Progressive Era itself, the volume primarily seeks to demonstrate that Progressivism not only shaped the deliberations over the United States' decision to enter the First World War but established the core facets of future foreign policy debates. In their introductory chapter, the editors characterise 20th-century debates over United States foreign relations as a combination of three 'fundamental antinomies', namely: unilateralism versus multilateralism, regionalism versus globalism, and military engagement versus military restraint. Whilst these antinomies manifested at the turn of the century, the editors posit that it was between the two world wars and against the backdrop of the Progressive Movement that they became embedded within policy-making discourses. Subsequent debates, including the response to fascism and the establishment of global stability after the Second World War, 'took off from the progressive program and were presented either as amendments to it or its necessary overthrow' (pp. 1-2).

To support this claim, *Progressivism and US Foreign Policy* contains twelve essays that each examine a prominent American 'thinker' and the ways in which they considered the nature of war and democracy between the two world wars. What united all these individuals was the fact that they 'all operated within or were compelled to confront the progressive mindset'. After the end of the First World War and the failure of Woodrow Wilson's Progressive vision of world order, Americans had to reconsider the extent to which Progressive ideals on the nature of peace and war ought to direct United States foreign policy. Cochran and Navari align these foreign policy intellectuals to one of three broad positions: those who generally maintained the Progressive agenda during the inter-war period; those who sought to engage the wider populace with issues of foreign relations; and those who desired to reconceptualise or overturn Progressive tenets entirely (pp. 11-12)

This structure works well and emphasises the variety of ways in which Progressive thought manifested after the First World War. Each chapter is well written and researched and suitably connected to the overarching argument of the volume. The contributing authors provide sufficient biographical detail for readers to

become familiarised with any individuals that they are less acquainted with, whilst effectively situating their subject's intellectual musings within wider contexts. The range of intellectuals that are examined is excellent and covers a variety of influences and themes, ranging from economics and social science, to international law and religion. Crucially, these individuals are not analysed in isolation, and the authors frequently highlight their personal and intellectual connections, bolstering the argument that they were all responding to the influence of Progressivism.

Part one, titled 'Keeping the faith,' examines four thinkers who sought to continue to adhere to the ideals of Progressivism and apply its tenets in new ways. The first two individuals, international lawyer Elihu Root and president of Columbia University Nicholas Murray Butler, were concerned with the Progressive nature of international law. Greg Russell focusses on Root's advocacy of a World Court after the First World War and explains that the esteemed former Secretary of State and War was adamant that an international court was required for democracy to function across the world. Notions of morality and rationality that underpinned Progressivism were central to Root's thinking and he saw legal processes and institutions as the most effective way to temper international disputes. However, for international legal systems to function effectively, all parties needed to share a willingness to do justice to one another, and Root believed that it was the duty of the United States to enlighten the rest of the world in matters of international law (p. 44). David Clinton's chapter on Butler echoes Russell's findings and explains that Butler paid particular attention to the necessity of effective systems of international arbitration. However, what Butler was most concerned with was the cultivation of the 'international mind' among the peoples of the world, namely that global public opinion needed to be aligned to the Progressive ideals of cooperation and dispute resolution. Without a supportive public, Butler believed that international law would ultimately fail to maintain international peace and security, and it was the mission of institutions such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to educate the peoples of the world (p. 64).

Lucian Ashworth examines geographer Isaiah Bowman's concept of American Lebensraum. Like several of the individuals studied in this volume, Bowman was involved with the work of the Inquiry and experienced the failure of Wilson's Progressive agenda first-hand. After the war, Bowman began to develop a re-interpretation of Friedrich Ratzel's theory of Lebensraum which, as opposed to the Nazi interpretation, argued that 'the extent of territory became less important than patterns of trade and (peaceful) migration' in the expansion of nations. Bowman agreed with the underlying notion of Lebensraum, that nations needed to expand to survive, but argued that the United States ought to lead a new world order based on the maintenance of open markets (pp. 84-5). He frequently clashed with Leo Pasvolsky, a 'back-room boy' of the State Department, whose thoughts are examined by Andrew Williams. Rather than advocating the implementation of American Lebensraum and United States leadership, Pasvolsky argued for a stable, open global economy based on international cooperation. The Soviet Union lay at the heart of their disagreement about Progressive economics: Bowman favoured a strong Western Europe to stand up to the Soviet Union, whereas Pasvolsky believed that a more accommodating and conciliatory approach was required (p. 93).

Part two addresses the individuals who believed that the Progressive agenda could only be realised when the wider population became invested in its core tenets. The first two individuals in this section knew and admired one another both personally and professionally, and the ideological connections between John Dewey and Jane Addams are clear to see. Charles Howlett analyses Dewey's commitment to pacifism, the peace movement, and the outlawry of war. As an alternative to Wilson's Progressivism, Dewey advocated a progressive peace ideology that called for civic engagement in decrying war and transforming 'passive communities' into forums of public debate (pp. 136-8). Similarly, Molly Cochran explains how Addams attempted to utilise the success of her domestic Progressivism on the world stage by emphasising non-state means of democratising international politics. Although these two figures held complementary beliefs, Cochran argues that whilst 'Dewey posed the problem of the public', it was the actions of Addams that 'worked toward assisting publics in finding themselves' through focussing on the 'motivations required to nurture any emergent possibilities for cosmopolitan justice' (p. 161).

Cornelia Navari examines another close friend of Dewey, the historian James T. Shotwell. Despite their

relationship, Navari notes that their disagreements on the question of war strained their friendship: whereas Dewey opposed the sanctioning systems of an international league, Shotwell drew upon the historical record and argued that 'the history of war taught that a system was what war prevention required' (p. 171). His attention shifted over time toward the role of economic and social problems and advocated the role of institutions that sought to eradicate in the maintenance of peace. Mikael Baaz's chapter addresses Harold Lasswell, one of the most prolific political scientists of the century. Lasswell believed that the future could be socially engineered and positioned political science as a key component in this process (p. 195). According to Lasswell, it was the role of social sciences to both determine and then shape social values to become more accommodating to a liberal world view.

Part three considers the individuals who responded to Progressivism with less enthusiasm after the malaise of Versailles. Cecelia Lynch bucks the trend of the volume slightly by examining the views of two individuals in her chapter, the theologians Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. They held different perspectives on the relationship between Christianity and war, with Reinhold favouring the pacifism inherent in Christianity, and H. Richard advocating war to expel evils from the world. Although neither brother could 'reject Progressivist faith in progress completely', Lynch explains that their divergent visions struggled to meld with existing Progressive tenets (pp. 222-3). In his chapter on Charles Beard, Christopher Nichols analyses the renowned historian's advocacy of a policy of 'continentalism', namely a quasi-isolationist avoidance of European affairs. Breaking with Wilsonian internationalism, Beard argued that the United States needed to turn inward and focus on both domestic affairs and its position within the Western Hemisphere (p. 243).

In his chapter, David Milne analyses the work of the 'lapsed Progressive' Walter Lippmann. Formerly an avid supporter of Wilson's world view, Lippmann sought to avoid a repeat of the failures of Versailles and argued that the United States needed to work with the other great powers to ensure global stability rather than relying on a successor organisation to the League of Nations. Milne outlines that Lippmann cast aside his former Progressive idealism and argued that peace was best maintained by force and preparedness rather than a system of international arbitration (pp. 269-70). Closing the volume, Patrick Jackson explains that, like Lippmann, Hans Morgenthau believed that idealism held no place in international politics. International relations needed to be understood as an inevitable struggle for domination and Morgenthau argued that the ultimate 'sin of the progressivist approach' was its conversion of the world into a 'rationalist utopia' when the reality was radically different (p. 297).

Progressivism and US Foreign Policy Between the World Wars will certainly interest historians of 20th-century United States foreign relations and intellectual history. University libraries would be well advised to purchase a copy, if nothing else to provide access to individual chapters that provide valuable insights into the work of key American foreign policy intellectuals. The price of the volume may dissuade all but the most specialised scholars from purchasing the book, but it would certainly sit comfortably on the reading list of any university module that focuses on United States foreign relations or intellectual history during the first half of the 20th century.

The one substantial weakness of the volume is the introduction's lack of engagement with other scholarship. Rather than containing a historiographical review of the relationship between Progressivism and United States foreign relations, a short bibliography is provided after the introductory chapter to provide an indication of what historians have already written on the subject. This felt quite lacklustre and it was startling to see readers directed to the Wikipedia entry on Progressivism as a first port of call. Whilst Wikipedia has undoubtedly become a more reliable and valuable tool for gaining initial insights into a topic over the past decade, the introduction would have been far more effective if it contained a historiographical analysis, which an academic audience would no doubt expect.

A more superfluous criticism concerns the image that was selected for the cover of the volume. The cartoon in question was published in Puck magazine in 1902 and poked fun at the failure of the American Anti-Imperialist Movement in preventing the annexation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. It is confusing to see the caricatured faces of the likes of Charles Francis Adams Jr. and George Frisbie Hoar on

the cover of a book that addresses the inter-war period, and whilst this hardly detracts from the quality of the volume, this unusual juxtaposition this will not go unnoticed by specialists. Perhaps *Progressivism and US Foreign Policy Between the World Wars* stands as a perfect example of the adage that one should not judge a book by its cover.

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